



From Mukogodo to Maasai: Ethnicity and Cultural Change in Kenya. Cronk, Lee. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004. 172 pp.

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This ethnography focuses primarily upon the unintended consequences of 1920s and 1930s British colonial land policy for the culture, economy, and ethnicity of the formerly foraging Mukogodo people of Kenya. Numerically small compared to the pastoralist Samburu and Maasai, these people formerly self-identified as Mukogodo based upon a shared Cushitic language, Yaaku; their residence in caves and rock shelters; and a delayed-return food foraging lifestyle in which honey derived from bee-keeping, and meat, primarily from the hyrax, formed the dietary staples. Based on a long period of fieldwork from 1985-1987 and three subsequent, shorter visits, Cronk documents their gradual change to a preference for identifying as Maasai and explores the underlying reasons for this shift. His approach is behavioral ecological and other major themes include commentary on the usefulness of Woodburn's distinction between "immediate-return" and "delayed return" foragers for understanding their socioeconomic changes and shift in ethnic identity, and the Trivers-Willard hypothesis concerning parental investment in offspring and the reproductive success of species under varying ecological circumstances.

Cronk documents how the British desire to reserve for Europeans the potentially agriculturally rich area in and around the 1920s location of the Mukogodo peoples lead to the massive displacement of many ethnic groups into or out of what became known as the "White Highlands." Already existing prior to these movements was a prestige ranking of peoples and lifestyles in the area. Maa-speakers and a pastoralist lifestyle, such as that pursued by the Maasai and Samburu, were highest ranked, and the foraging lifestyle of the Mukogodo and others was lowest ranked. This latter economic strategy was summed up by Maa-speakers in the derogatory term *il-torobo*, a variant of which, *Dorobo*, was adopted by the Europeans as an ethnic designate rather than as the class distinction that it implies. Next, European administrators and settlers became convinced that these Dorobo were the original occupants of the land, and used this as justification for their need to free up the highlands for European occupation. They created a Dorobo reserve from which, for most of the next 50 years, all other peoples were systematically expelled. These British efforts backfired, however, and Cronk is able to document how, for a 40-year period after the turn of the twentieth century, they lead instead to a scramble by male members of displaced pastoralist peoples to marry Mukogodo wives, to inflate and transform local bridewealth practices, and to create a Mukogodo shift to pastoralism, with accompanying cultural, religious and language shifts. By 2001, Cronk found in a representative sample of Mukogodo Division residents that nearly three fourths self-identified as Maasai or as belonging to groups identified as Maasai.

This short volume has a number of intertwining themes that makes it an appropriate choice for a variety of upper-division anthropology courses. It combines the themes of sociocultural, economic and ethnic identity change, with impacts of colonialism and post-



colonialism, theories of social inequality and the emergence of social complexity, language loss, gender, theories of marital and reproductive strategies, child development and parental investments in children. As part of the Westview Case Studies in Anthropology series, the book is intended to be written in an “engaging and accessible format” (www.perseusbooksgroup.com/westview/collection, accessed May 29, 2005), and Cronk’s clear and pedagogical descriptions of the fieldwork process, and his introductory chapter vignettes will no doubt succeed in capturing and holding the interest of upper-division anthropology students in courses focusing on any of the above topics. Furthermore, regardless of whether one supports or is critical of his behavioral ecological postulates, these are very clearly and systematically rendered and, as such, can serve as excellent departure points for debates and for pedagogical discussions of how hypotheses emerge, are tested in the field, and then modified and accepted or rejected.

What puzzles this reviewer concerns another of the series’ purposes: the case studies are “intended for both professional and student audiences,” a dual purpose which meets with mixed results. For example, the volume has no references in the text. The professional reader yearns for these in order to access the specific works of Cronk and others that are discussed; and the instructor will want these in order to expose the student to proper research process. The short list of recommended readings at the end of each chapter are no substitute for in-text parenthetical references to specific works under discussion and would not have detracted substantially from the flow of the text. The maps could also be rendered in more detail, e.g., by providing a small indent map of Africa showing the location of Kenya; and then a more detailed geographical and political map of Kenya showing the location of the Mukogodo and others. The work is a volume in a case study series that appears to be modeled upon the old and now defunct Holt, Rinehart and Winston series, but that has tried to avoid some less successful aspects of the latter, such as moving away from the formulaic chapters and subject headings, while making the writing fresher and presenting the people discussed as active agents of change. On balance, I believe it succeeds well as a pedagogically-oriented ethnography and less well as a contribution to mainstream research, and I look forward to the day when our discipline has a series that does both.

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